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March 27, 2006

The Honorable Greg Walden
United States House of Representatives
1210 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Walden:

On behalf of the American Hospital Association (AHA) and our 4,700 member hospitals, health care systems and other providers of care, and our 31,000 individual members, we are pleased to support The Medicare Rural Health Provider Payment Extension Act. This legislation would extend important rural provisions from the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act (MMA) of 2003 that are set to expire. We applaud your commitment to America's rural health care providers.

Congress shares this commitment, having passed several significant provisions in the MMA that include extension of the outpatient hold harmless for rural hospitals under 100 beds and Sole Community Hospitals, reasonable cost payment for outpatient lab services performed by rural hospitals and a 5% rural add-on for home health services.

Your legislation takes the next step: ensuring that these provisions continue to provide the assistance that rural providers need to take care of people, and that Congress intended to help them do the job. Rural hospitals and health care providers are often the backbone of their communities and it is essential that these expiring programs be continued.

Again, we are pleased to support this legislation and look forward to working with you and your colleagues to achieve passage of the bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rick Pollack'.

Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President

